1. Introduction

In the historical pragmatic research of (im)polite vocatives, which began in the late 1950s, the examination of vocative shifts (henceforth VSHs) as markers of changes of emotions and interpersonal relationships has become a prevalent research topic. Several scholars have argued that, even though the study of terms of address reveals much information about the basic emotions and social relationships among the protagonists of historical texts, the retrospective analysis of strategic changes of vocatives in discourse interactions is rather illuminating and enables one to capture and reconstruct the transformation of emotions and the fluctuation of power. Therefore, many historical pragmatic studies have addressed the issue that the use of personal pronouns and other (im)polite vocatives is not inherently constant in certain historical social relationships. For example, in the above quotation from “King Lear”, the open
conflict that emerges between the protagonists Albany and Edmund during their interaction manifests itself in a VSH: Albany – who has earlier addressed Edmund with the honorific vocative ‘Sir’ and with ‘you’, the honorific personal pronoun in archaic English texts, as a custom – addresses Edmund by his personal name and uses the direct ‘thou’ pronominal form towards him; both of these forms implicate disdain in the given context. In other words, the above VSH works as a marker of changes in emotional and interpersonal relationships between the interactants.

The aim of this study is to explore VSHs in historical Chinese communication, according to a written corpus that reflects the language use of the period spanning the 15th through 19th centuries (see more on this timeframe in section 2.3.1), from a discourse-constructivist perspective (cf. Bucholtz 1999, Cook 1998; 2005, He 1995 and Ochs 1993). VSH refers to the following phenomenon that exists in every ‘address system’ (cf. Braun 1988) containing self and other addressing vocatives with varying degrees of formality. In general, the interlocutors of discourse interactions, relying on contextual factors (see Marquez Reiter 2001, p. 59) and personal intentions, formulate certain schemata of vocative use to maintain certain interpersonal relationships. They can, however, also utilise deviations from such vocative schemata in the course of interactions, in order to signal some changes of emotions and/or interpersonal relationships. Such schematic deviations – determined as the VSH phenomenon in this paper – are open for contextual interpretation (cf. Eelen 2001, Watts 2003), that is, it depends on the addressees’ understanding how they evaluate VSHs, even though these shifts themselves also tend to follow certain sociopragmatic (cf. Leech 1983) patterns.

The present work adopts the so-called ‘constructivist’ perspective in the analysis of historical Chinese VSHs. The ‘constructive’ concept refers to the increasingly prominent framework in communication (and, more widely, social) studies which – relying on Bourdieu 1977; 1991, Milroy 1987 and other social theories – holds that the protagonists of a social interaction in a given ‘community of practice’ (cf. Wenger 1998) can continuously (re-)construct their interpersonal and social relationships. This constructional process is also represented in the linguistic co-construction of discourse features by the interactants: for example, as Haruko Cook 1998; 2005 has shown, Japanese interlocutors quite often deviate from the sociopragmatically accepted schema of honorific use in their attempts to shape and reshape their emotional and social relationships, hence attaining certain communicational goals. The constructivist perspective can provide new insights into the work of historical VSHs. Former historical pragmatic studies, even recent ones such as Mazzon 2003 and Stein

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4 In this study the terms ‘historical’, ‘traditional’ and ‘old’ are applied as synonyms of pre-modern (15th–19th century) Chinese communication, hence they are used rather loosely. Similarly, the expressions ‘vocative’ and ‘term of address’ are interchangeable, and also they simultaneously denote the phenomena of self and interlocutor addressing. The terms ‘polite’ and ‘honorific’ are used as synonyms, as well.

5 See a more detailed definition of the VSH phenomenon in 2.1.
2003, adopt a speaker-biased view on VSHs: they observe vocatives and VSHs as products of certain speakers in certain contexts rather than interactional resources (cf. Thornborrow 2002) that are subject to discourse co-construction, that is, they study VSHs isolated from discourse in a wider sense. (As far as the author of this paper knows, heretofore the only exception to this historical pragmatic research trend is Michi Shiina’s 2006 yet unpublished work on the textual analysis of European dramatic texts.) As the constructivist analysis of this paper will show, however, VSHs are not isolated in interactions: because they are implicit offers for emotional/relational changes, and so they are potential tools for the speakers to strategically attain certain discourse goals, the interlocutors can either accept or decline a certain VSH in the course of co-constructing a discourse interaction.

Besides contributing to historical pragmatic theories by its analytic methodology, this paper analyses vocative shifts in historical Chinese communication in order to contribute to the research of historical Chinese (im)polite vocatives. The issue of Chinese VSHs is a regrettably understudied topic: even the best-known works on historical and modern Chinese terms of address (cf. Lü Shuxiang 1985, Liu Hongli 2001, Chen Songcen 2001, and Yuan Tingdong 2004) ignore VSHs, in spite of the fact that this phenomenon existed and exists in both traditional and modern Chinese communication. This reluctance of researchers to acknowledge the existence of VSHs is supposedly rooted in the fact that historical Chinese – similarly to modern Mandarin – was a basically ‘non-retractable’ language (see Berschin et. al. 1987; Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003, pp. 14-15), that is, the interactants could not make arbitrary shifts between more and less deferential forms once they evolved a certain addressing schema. Furthermore, it is regularly claimed that in East Asian ‘honorific languages’, such as Japanese, Korean, and traditional Chinese politeness, the use of linguistic formulae is sociolinguistically prescribed (cf. Sachiko Ide 1989, and Yoshiko Matsumoto 1989). Nevertheless, the present study will show that VSHs were quite regularly applied in old Chinese communication, similarly to other historical and modern languages.

The present paper has the following structure. Section two introduces (a) the way in which VSH is interpreted in the present paper; (b) the data of research, traditional Chinese (im)polite vocatives and VSH phenomenon; and (c) the historical pragmatic methodology with the help of which the reconstruction of VSHs in old China has become possible. Section three observes the work of traditional Chinese VSHs in practice via the analysis of several discourse extracts from a constructivist perspective, in order to address the aforementioned two goals of this paper. Finally, the study concludes with a brief summary in section four.

6 As far as the author of this paper knows, the only related, albeit regrettably brief, work that studies the modern Chinese VSH phenomenon was written by Zhao Dongsheng in 2003.
2. The data and methodology

Before examining the practical work of traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon, it is necessary to define how VSH, a rather ambiguous phenomenon, is interpreted in this paper and overview some basic features of the historical Chinese vocative system and VSH phenomenon. Relying on studies that deal with the categorisation of the traditional Chinese vocative lexicon (cf. Peng Guoyue 2000, Kádár 2005a; 2007a), this section will determine some basic vocative categories of different (im)politeness value, among which conversational shifts could occur. Next, section two will briefly discuss the methodology that was used for the reconstruction of VSHs, and will also make some remarks about the transcription of the studied examples.

2.1 The definition of VSH

VSH is an immanently vague term because in social interactions one can always vary the vocatives (s)he applies to address the same person, that is, to a certain degree VSH is a concomitant of human communication. Nevertheless, a ‘neutral’ VSH, for example, when one shifts from ‘mate’ to ‘pal’ in a friendly interaction, should be differentiated from the conscious pragmatic act of VSH, which signals the change of emotions and social/interpersonal relationships. In what follows, let us define the term VSH as it is used in this paper.

As was previously noted in the introduction, the phenomenon of VSH is based on ‘strategic deviations’ (see Kádár 2007b, p. 141) from certain addressing schemas evolved by one or more members of a given community of practice. Should a given community of practice be constituted from only two interactants or many members, be it a long standing or a temporary one, its members – relying on their personal emotions and social relationships, or simply their perception of social ‘appropriateness’ (see Watts 1992, p. 52) – tend to formulate a certain ‘unmarked’ (self/other) addressing schema (cf. Quirk 1966, Mulholland 1987, Mazzon 1992, Hope 1994, and Bruti 2000). Whenever emotional or other contextual factors make it necessary, the interactants can deviate from this ‘unmarked’ schema by applying ‘marked’ terms of address, which signal emotional/relational changes in the given discourse. Turning back to the aforementioned example of Albany and Edmund, although Albany does not utter a ‘bald on record’ (see Brown and Levinson 1987, p. 60) critique of Edmund, the reader who is familiar with the dramatis personae of “King Lear” and their relationships will quite automatically perceive that Albany makes a VSH by applying terms of address that count as marked in the community of practice constituted by himself and Edmund; that is, Albany’s VSH signals emotional/interpersonal relational changes as a ‘meta-message’ (see Tannen 1983, p. 31-33).

It should be noted that the effective communicational work of a VSH presupposes a certain consensus (i.e., mutual understanding) between the
interlocutors concerning what the ‘unmarked’ schema in their community of practice might be. From a discourse constructivist perspective, however, such a consensus is not as determined and long lasting as it was claimed to be by earlier theories, such as Gilman and Brown 1958. In fact, the interlocutors can continuously reformulate, or at least make attempts to reformulate, their vocative consensus, since the use of a marked form inherently entails the possibility of negotiating a new vocative consensus. For example, in a friendly interaction the vocative ‘motherfucker’ (used in a teasing sense) can be a temporary standard for the given community of practice, even though in other contexts the members of the given community may not treat swearing/four-letter terms of address as an unmarked standard.

From the above description of the mechanism of VSHs it becomes evident that the members of a community of practice make a shift from an unmarked to a marked form whenever they perform a VSH. Consequently, a VSH can only have any significant pragmatic effect if the terms of address, between which the given shift occurs, have different stylistic (politeness) value. In other words, the phenomenon of strategic VSH presupposes that the styles of the ‘unmarked’ and the ‘marked’ vocative forms differ, otherwise the given shift cannot signal any perceptible emotional/relational change and so it remains ‘neutral’. For example, the aforementioned terms ‘mate’ and ‘pal’ constitute one vocative category of roughly identical politeness value, and if a speaker intends to signal some emotional/relational change, (s)he might have to apply another vocative category of obviously different politeness value. The choice of the new category depends on the extent and the quality of the emotional/relational change that the given speaker intends to signal (i.e., how large the given emotional change is, and whether it is positive or negative). In short, the mechanism of a VSH can be described as a choice of a community of practice among vocative categories of sociopragmatically different politeness value.

The concept of vocative categories (see more in Busse 2006) helps analysing VSHs from a theoretical perspective because a large vocative lexicon becomes more accessible if one categorises it into a limited number of vocative categories, which have different politeness value in a given sociopragmatic context. The next section will follow this view and will determine the vocative categories that existed in traditional Chinese communication, in order to be able to study the old Chinese VSH phenomenon.

2.2. Traditional Chinese vocative categories

In order to be able to analyse the VSH phenomenon that presupposes a strategic change between vocative categories of several stylistic (politeness) values in old China, it is necessary to categorise traditional Chinese terms of address. The researcher who aims to study VSHs in old China inevitably encounters the problem of how the immense quantity of traditional Chinese terms of address can be categorised. As in traditional Chinese (im)politeness the addressing
The phenomenon was of central importance (cf. Yueguo Gu 1990, Kádár 2005a), the quantity of vocatives in Chinese became larger than in any other historical language (cf. Kádár 2007a): classical sources of historical vocatives, such as the Chengwei lu (Record of Addressing) written by the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) philologist Liang Zhangju (1775–1849), and contemporary ones, such as Ji Changhong’s Hanyu chengwei dacidian (A Comprehensive Dictionary of Chinese Vocatives), contain several thousands of terms of address.

This large bulk of vocatives, however, can be relatively easily categorised if one observes it from a functional perspective. Insofar as Chinese vocatives are studied according to their applicability in polite interactions, it becomes clear that only terms of address that express some interlocutor-elevating and self-denigrating connotation can occur in traditional Chinese polite contexts. This phenomenon is rooted in the traditional Chinese notion of polite, or more precisely ‘ritual’, communication: according to the concept of rituality, social interactions are properly conducted if one elevates others and denigrates oneself; it is necessary, furthermore, to address oneself and others in a proper way. Thus traditional Chinese honorific vocatives consist of interlocutor-elevating and self-denigrating forms of address (henceforth elevating/denigrating addressing, i.e. EA/DAs; see more on this terminology in Kádár 2007a), or vocative strategies that express such connotation. Similarly, daren大人 (lit. ‘great man’, i.e. ‘outstanding person’; see Ji Changhong 2000, pp. 148-149) refers to the interlocutor, xiaoren 小人 (lit. ‘small man’, i.e., ‘humble person’; see Ji Changhong 2000, pp. 1057-1058) refers to the speaker. Because of the importance of this honorific lexicon in traditional Chinese polite communication, a ‘reversed’ impolite (i.e., self-elevating/interlocutor-denigrating) EA/DA lexicon has also been developed as an impolite ‘antithesis’ of the polite EA/DA phenomenon. For example, tulü 禿驢 (lit. ‘hairless donkey’) denigrates Buddhist monks who shave their heads as a custom (see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 936), while laoye 老爺 (lit. ‘old gentleman’, i.e. ‘high-ranking person’) occurs as a self-elevating term in impolite register (see Ji Changhong 2000, pp. 528-529).

Before adopting the modern expression limao 礼貌 (‘politeness’, lit. ‘ritual appearance’), the Chinese used the comprehensive term ‘rites’ (li 礼) in reference to polite communication.

These concepts were well documented in classical Confucian morality books, such as the Liji 礼记 (“Record of Rites”) compiled by Dai Sheng 戴盛 during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220); see more in Legge 1985. It must be noted that addressing and elevation/denigration phenomena are important in modern Chinese politeness, as well (cf. Yueguo Gu 1990, Lin Meirong 1998). Historical and modern Chinese politeness ‘systems’ are, however, strongly different, and so traditional honorific vocatives, which are studied in this paper, have little relation to modern Chinese politeness, see more in Kádár 2007a.

It should be noted that in traditional Chinese communication besides EA/DA formulae there were several non-formulaic vocative strategies (in a Brown and Levinsonian (1987) sense) that expressed elevating/denigrating meaning. For example, addressing oneself with one’s own personal name conveyed familiar self-denigrating sense (see the analysis of extract 3).
Amongst the several vocative categories only EA/DAs conveyed (im)polite (meta-)message\(^\text{10}\) in the hierarchical traditional Chinese society by elevating and denigrating oneself and others on a ‘symbolic social scale’ (cf. Peng Guoyue 1998; 2000). Consequently, ‘neutral’ (i.e. non-elevating/denigrating) vocatives, such as personal pronouns (henceforth PPs), or non-elevating/denigrating nominal vocative expressions, could scarcely be used in explicitly polite registers (see Lü Shuxiang 1985, pp. 34-36). From an evaluative perspective (cf. Eelen 2001), ‘neutral’ vocatives were open for being evaluated as ‘impolite’ in contexts where contextual factors (cf. Marquez Reiter 2000) necessitated the use of honorific language. This does not mean that PPs and other neutral vocatives could never occur in honorific contexts, but in such contexts they primarily served the goal of facilitating the referential interpretation of EA/DAs, as in cases like

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「林教頭，你 […]」
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“Lin jiaotou, ni […]”

“The surname + jiaotou structure is a polite EA expression used towards teachers, thou (ni, second person PP) […]”

*(Shuihu quanzhuan 水滸全傳 / Chapter eight)*

The above classification of vocatives as (im)polite EA/DAs vs. PPs and other neutral (non-polite) vocatives constitute three basic vocative categories of different politeness value: (a) impolite EA/DAs (being explicitly impolite); (b) non-polite vocatives (PPs and other nominal structures, being open to be interpreted as impolite in certain contexts); and (c) polite vocatives (EA/DAs). In reality, however, the traditional Chinese vocative system was more complex because polite EA/DAs, the only honorific vocative category, had ‘non-familiar’ and ‘familiar’ subgroups. The ‘familiar’ vs. ‘non-familiar’ distinction is a fundamental one in both traditional and modern Chinese society (and, generally, in every East Asian culture and society) where individuals are treated as members of familiar units (cf. Francis Hsu 1981, Yuling Pan 2000). As Yuling Pan (2000, p. 102) notes,

> The Chinese concept of self includes the biological individual, his/her immediate environment including family as well as a larger environment including those who are related to him/her either by blood, profession, or locality.

That is, the Chinese typically treated (and still treat) themselves (as well as their dependents) as members of certain familiar communities and their interlocutors

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\(^{10}\) As noted in Kádár 2007a, there can be a difference between the lexical and the meta-meaning of a few traditional Chinese EA/DA terms, even though this phenomenon is rare. In other words, there were some EA/DA terms which conveyed 'neutral' lexical meaning while they expressed elevating/denigrating connotation in old Chinese discourse interactions.
(and the interlocutors’ dependents) as ‘insiders’ or ‘outsiders’ of the given community. In other words, in the Chinese cognition, society is constituted from familiar and non-familiar units. As Peng Guoyue’s 2000, pp. 63-80 and pp. 141-158 study has shown, this familiar vs. non-familiar distinction did not only influence traditional Chinese social behaviour in a narrow sense, but it also manifested itself in the traditional Chinese honorific lexicon and its conversational application. The polite EA/DAs can be divided into familiar and non-familiar subgroups, that is, in old China interlocutors chose EA/DAs according to their relation to their interlocutors. For example, in a non-familiar setting the speaker could denigrate himself with the aforementioned term xiaoren (‘humble person’) and elevate his interlocutor as daren (‘outstanding person’), while in a familiar context different EA/DA formulae had to be applied, such as xiaodi (lit. ‘small younger brother’, i.e. ‘this humble younger brother’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1040) and xiongzhang (lit. ‘elder brother leader’, i.e. ‘high-ranking elder brother; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1091). In short, shifting between the familiar and non-familiar honorific vocative formulae has been a further way of expressing emotional and social relational changes in historical Chinese polite interactions as well as VSHs within the aforementioned three basic categories. The non-familiar–familiar shift was a regular phenomenon because in old Chinese cognition, as in modern times, ‘familiar’ groups were not restricted to the family, and the familiar EA/DA lexicon could be applied towards any rank-equal interactant to express respect and intimacy at the same time through the symbolic act of deferentially ‘inviting’ the interlocutor into one’s group.

In summation, section 2.2 has separated four old Chinese vocative groups of different politeness value, from which interlocutors could choose unmarked and marked schemata (see Appendix I concerning the possible varieties of shifts within the four vocative categories and the proportion of occurrence of these varieties in the collected data). In section three shifts between these categories will be analysed in discourse interactions. But, before examining this issue, let us briefly overview the methodology by means of

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11 This phenomenon is regularly referred to in the pragmatic literature by its Japanese name, that is, as the uchi vs. soto (lit. ‘inside’) vs. ‘outside’) distinction (cf. Bachnik and Quinn 1994).
12 It must be noted that to a certain extent this linguistic phenomenon exists in modern Mandarin, as well; see more in Huang Tao 2002, pp. 91-133.
13 It must be noted – even though a cross-cultural diachronic analysis of this issue is beyond the scope of the present paper – that the Chinese system of vocative categories strongly differs from the more intensively studied historical European vocative categories. In medieval Europe, in contrast to old China, VSH was a basically pronominal phenomenon because “many European languages have more than one pronominal form that can be used to refer to a single addressee. One pronominal form is generally used for more intimate and less formal situations, while another is used for more formal, more distant and more polite situations” (see Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003, p. 3). Shifts between these pronominal categories could be utilised to express closeness vs. deference, intimacy vs. deference, or impersonal vs. emotive stance (cf. Brown and Gilman 1989, Kopytko 1993, and Mausch 1993).
which the reconstruction of the old Chinese VSH phenomenon has been made possible.

2.3 The methodology

As this paper examines historical Chinese communication, it is necessary to discuss the methodology and data which made it possible to reconstruct the properties of VSHs. It is also useful to briefly touch on the way in which the chosen examples are analysed and transcribed.

2.3.1 The reconstruction of traditional Chinese VSHs

Traditional Chinese VSHs are recorded in historical Chinese sources, therefore, they can be reconstructed via the historical pragmatic analysis of literary texts. This methodology is based on those historical pragmatic works which have addressed the issue of how to reconstruct spoken data from literary texts (cf. Culpeper and Kytö 2000, Jucker 2000, and Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003). Since it is beyond the scope of the present study to introduce the process of reconstructing historical Chinese VSHs in detail, it is sufficient here to mention some of its basic concepts (see more on the reconstruction of historical Chinese politeness phenomena in Kádár 2007b, pp. 129-131).

The successful reconstruction of traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon initially required choosing the most suitable corpora for the research. As Taavitsainen and Jucker 2003, p. 7 note, “There are several types of data that provide reasonably good approximations to spoken language.” In other words, there are differences in historical corpora with respect to their applicability for historical pragmatic research. The linguistic features of VSHs in theory could be studied in the following two major written traditional Chinese corpora:

a) works written in Classical Chinese (wenyan 文言, lit. ‘refined language’);

b) Chinese literary pieces written in the so-called vernacular Chinese (casually referred to as baihua 白話, lit. ‘unadorned speech’).

The vernacular corpus proved to be more suitable for the reconstruction process than the Classical one because vernacular literary pieces record much more realistic discourses than works written in Classical (cf. Zhang Zhongxing 1995).

As a next step, the reconstruction process was continued by a comparative analysis of a large quantity of texts of diverse genres/dates, and origin. In order to provide reliable data, 178 discourse extracts that contain VSHs were collected together (with the aid of computer databases) from fourteen literary pieces written in different periods between the 15th and the 19th centuries (see a list of the studied works in Appendix II). These pieces include several literary genres, such as
a) Ming (1368–1644) and Qing dynasty novels, such as the *Shuihu quanzhuan* (水滸全傳, “The Water Margin Story”), the *Xiyou ji* (西遊記, “Journey to the West”), or the *Honglou meng* (紅樓夢, “Dream of the Red Chamber”).

b) Ming and Qing dynasty short-story collections, such as the *Sanyan* (三言, lit. “Three Speeches”) trilogy.

In addition to encompassing diversities in genre and date of compilation, these works record the language use of different areas, or were compiled by authors who were born in different regions of the country and so applied local linguistic features in their works. For example, as Kōsaka Junichi 1987, p. 13 notes, the parlance of several characters of the novel *Shuihu quanzhuan* reflects the Shandong province patois.

Because the 178 discourse extracts that were collected with the help of the aforementioned analytic steps show relative concordance in the workings of VSHs, the reconstruction of traditional Chinese vocative phenomenon has become possible. It should be noted that the present paper will examine discourse examples cited from the *Shuihu quanzhuan* (水滸全傳, “Water Margin Story”), a well-known Ming dynasty picaresque novel attributed to Shi Nai’an 施耐庵 (the accurate dates of his birth and death are not known)\(^\text{14}\), in order to be able to analyse VSHs in a homogeneous context. The *Shuihu quanzhuan* has been chosen as a representative corpus because according to Chinese literary histories (e.g. Qi Yukun 1997), the novel is written in a prominently life-like style that reflects the 16\(^\text{th}\) century Chinese colloquial. This claim is supported by textual analysis carried out by the author of this paper, according to which VSHs occur more frequently in the *Shuihu quanzhuan* than in many other Chinese novels. This is because the novel strongly imitates spoken language where VSH is a regular phenomenon. In short, the *Shuihu quanzhuan* is a representative work: while it describes the workings of VSHs in a similar manner to other works written in the 15\(^\text{th}\)–19\(^\text{th}\) century period, it reproduces VSHs in a sufficiently realistic way.

After this overview of the reconstruction methodology of the traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon, let us briefly look at the way in which the cited discourse extracts are transcribed.

### 2.3.2 The analysis and transcription of the examples

Since this paper studies a historical corpus, it cannot apply the detailed transcription conventions used in most modern discourse and conversation analytic studies (developed by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). Because this study primarily focuses on vocative formulae, an independent discourse

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\(^{14}\) See a general introduction of the novel *Shuihu quanzhuan* in Haft and Idema 1996, pp. 203-204.
notation is applied: the studied formulae are framed in the Chinese text, while they are underlined in the alphabetic (pinyin) transcription and the English translation. A typical example is as follows:

1. “官人，请坐拜茶。”
   那人见了史进长大魁伟，像条好汉，便来与他施礼。两个坐下。史进道：
   2. “小人大胆，敢问官人高姓大名?”

Shi Jin lianmang qishen shili, dao:
1. “Guanren, qingzuo-baicha.”
   Na-ren jian-le Shi Jin changda-kuiwei, xiang tiao-haohan, bian lai yu-ta shili.
   Liang-ge zuoxia. Shi Jin dao:
2. “Xiaoren dadan, ganwen guanren gaoxing-daming?”

Shi Jin hurriedly rose from his seat and bowed before Tixia, saying:
1. “Respected official (guanren, a non-familiar polite EA expression), I would like to respectfully offer you some tea.”
   Tixia, seeing that Shi Jin was a well-built valiant man, quickly responded with a bow. They sat down together. Shi Jin said:
2. “Prithee forgive me, but may this humble person (xiaoren, a non-familiar polite EA expression) be so bold as to enquire after your illustrious family name and honourable personal name, respected official (guanren)?”

(Chapter 3)

It should be noted that in the English translation of the texts the archaic English ‘you/thou’ pronominal distinction will be utilised to represent the familiar vs. non-familiar stylistic difference of traditional Chinese vocatives and VSHs. Roughly identically to the original roles of ‘you/thou’ application (cf. Burnley 2003, Busse 2003), ‘thou’ will not only be applied to represent impolite contexts where the direct PP is utilised to convey rudeness, but also in familiar settings where it conveys intimacy; ‘you’, on the other hand, will be used in non-familiar contexts.

Finally, it must be noted that in the analyses of the examples the protagonists and the background events will be briefly introduced in order to overview the wider contexts of the interactions. Readers who are familiar with the novel Shuihu quanzhuan can simply ignore these short introductions, which will be given directly below the cited discourse extracts.

After surveying these technical issues, let us examine the traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon.
3. The constructivist analysis of traditional Chinese VSHs

In order to examine shifts within the traditional Chinese vocative categories from a discourse constructivist perspective, this study will analyse four discourse extracts as case studies. The analysis of these extracts will provide insights into the work of the VSH phenomenon in old China by showing the ways in which VSHs were utilised in interactions. It will, furthermore, contribute to the historical pragmatic research of the VSH phenomenon because it will support the claim that VSHs should be studied in a wider interactional context. Previous historical pragmatic studies, which examine VSHs in an isolated context, implicitly predict their effect on the addressees. The constructional analysis will, however, point out the fact that VSHs – being immanent ‘offers’ for emotional/relational change – are interactional tools which can aid the attainment of certain discourse goals, and so a given shift can either be accepted or declined by the addressee.

To address the above goals, the following concepts will be adhered to in the analysis of the studied extracts chosen from the novel *Shuihu quanzhuan*:

a) in order to show the operation of the VSH phenomenon, the analyses of the discourse examples will describe VSHs according to the vocative category concept (cf. 2.1 and 2.2). In other words, every VSH will be described as a shift from category X to category Y, which connotes some emotional/societal changes in a given discourse context;

b) in order to prove that VSH is not an isolated utterance but has to be interpreted as an interactional tool, VSH will be examined as a reciprocal activity. That is, it will be shown that VSHs in many cases serve speakers to strategically attain certain discourse goals, and the addressees’ reactions to, or evaluation of (cf. Eelen 2001), these VSHs will be studied, as well, by observing their ‘countering’ vocatives. It will be examined, furthermore, whether there is consent or conflict between the VSHs and the ‘counter’ vocatives of the interactants: as will be shown, in some cases the interlocutors are quite reluctant to take up a new unmarked vocative schema because it conflicts in a way with their own interactional goals.

The discourse extracts examined below were chosen because they have the following properties that can be utilised to attain the aforementioned goals of this study:

a) They represent shifts from every traditional Chinese vocative category. Although it is impossible to give examples for all possible shifts within the four traditional Chinese vocative categories (which would necessitate studying twelve interactions),\(^{15}\) because of limitations of space, the extracts

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\(^{15}\) See Appendix I.
will provide examples for cases where speakers make marked shifts from impolite EA/DAs (extract 1), PPs (extract 2), non-familiar polite EA/DAs (extract 3) and familiar polite EA/DAs (extract 4) in discourse interactions. Therefore, the analyses of these extracts will give a rather comprehensive overview of traditional Chinese VSHs. Furthermore, the fact that shifts could be made from all of the vocative categories will support the claim that in the hierarchical traditional Chinese society (cf. Ebrey 1981: Rozman 1991), where the use of terms of address is arguably non-retractable (cf. Berschin et. al. 1987) and sociolinguistically prescribed (as in Japanese and Korean, cf. Sachiko Ide 1989), VSH was a pivotal communicational means, similarly to other historical and modern languages.

b) They provide examples for both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ interactional application of VSHs. In extracts (1), (2) and (3) VSHs are utilised to express ‘positive’ meta-messages, that is, they serve expressing positive emotions and/or the wish to improve interpersonal relationships, while in (4) the VSH is applied to express negative emotions and/or the wish to increase social distance. The fact that VSHs had both positive and negative application possibilities supports the claim (similarly to point a. above) that even though the use of traditional Chinese vocative formulae is claimed to be very ‘rigid’, speakers could make use of VSHs in communication.

c) In the studied examples the interlocutors adopt different interactional behaviours, and so the analyses of the addressees’ reactions (i.e. counter vocatives) represent the complexity of the co-constuction of unmarked vocative schemas in discourse. In (1) there is a consent between the speaker’s VSH and the addressee’s counter vocative; in (2) there is an explicit conflict between the speaker’s VSH and the addressee’s counter vocative (i.e., the addressee does not accept the proposed new vocative standard); in (3) a new vocative schema is formed between the speaker and the addressee, but its formation is gradual (i.e., the addressee is reluctant to follow the speaker’s VSH first but later he accepts the previously marked form as unmarked); finally, in (4), similarly to (2), the addressee is reluctant to take up the new vocative schema proposed by the speaker because it conflicts with her interactional interests. These differences in the co-constitution of the interactions will support the claim that VSHs are interactional tools which have to be observed and interpreted in a wider context because their communicational work depends as much on the addressee as on the speaker.

3.1 The case studies

Let us begin the exploration of traditional Chinese VSHs by studying example (1) where the speaker shifts from impolite EA/DAs and PP forms to familiar EA/DAs, in order to express a positive emotional/relational change. The
communicational goals of the speaker and the addressee coincide here, thus the addressee accepts the new vocative schema implicitly proposed by the speaker:

(1) \[14\]

王進看了半晌，不覺失口道：
1. 「這棒也使得好了，只是有破綻，贏不得真好漢。」

那後生聽得大怒，喝道：
2. 「你是甚麼人？敢來笑話我的大事！豈經了七八個有名的師父，我不信倒不如你！你敢和我一拚么？」

說猶未了，太公道來，喝那後生：
3. 「不得無禮！」

那後生道：
4. 「這棒也使得好了。」

太公道：
5. 「客人豈不會使槍棒？」

王進道：
6. 「既是宅內小官人，若愛學時，小人點撥他端正如何？」

太公道：
7. 「是老漢的兒子。」

王進道：
8. 「既是宅內小官人，若愛學時，小人點撥他端正如何？」

太公道：
9. 「恁地時，十分好。」

眾叫那後生來拜師父。那後生那裡肯拜，心中越怒，道：
10. 「阿爹，休聽這厮胡說！若吃他贏得我這條棒法，我便拜他為師！」

王進道：
11. 「小官人若愛學時，便要一棒耍。」

[...] 

那後生爬將起來，便去旁邊掇條凳子，納王進坐，便拜道：
12. 「我枉自經了許多師家，原來不值半分。師父，沒奈何，只得請教。」

[...] 

史進那裡肯放，說道：
13. 「師父只在此開過了，小弟奉養你母子二人 [...]」

王進道：
14. 「賢弟 [...]」

Wang Jin kan-le banshang, bu jue shikou-dao:
1. “Zhe bang ye shi-de hao-le, zhishi you pozhan, ying-bu-de zhen-haohan.”

Na housheng ting-de da-nu dao:

Shuo you-wei-le, taigong daolai, he na housheng:
3. “Bu-de wu-lit”

Na housheng dao:
4. “Ponai-zhesi xiaohua wo-de bangfa.”
Taigong dao:
5. “Keren mo-bu hui-shi qiangbang?”
Wang Jin dao:
6. “Po-xiao de-xie. Ganwen zhangshang, zhe hounsheng shi zhai-shang heren?”
Taigong dao:
7. “Shi laohan-de erzi.”
Wang Jin dao:
8. “Jiran shi zhainei xiaoguanren, ruo ai-xue-shi, xiaoren dian bo ta duanzheng ruhe?”
Taigong dao:
9. “Ren-de-shi, shifen hao.”
Bian jiao na housheng lai bai shifu. Na housheng na li kenbai, xin zhong yue nu, dao:
10. “A-die, xiu-ting zhesi hushuo! Ruo chi ta ying-de wo zhetiao-bangfa, wo bian bai ta wei shi!”
Wang Jin dao:
11. “Xiaoguanren ruoshi bu dangcun-shi, jiaoliang yi bang shua.”
[...]
Na housheng pa-jiang-qilai, bian qu pangbian tuo tiao dengzi, na Wang Jin zuo, bian bai dao:
[...]
Shi Jin nali ken-fang, shuodao:
13. “Shifu hi zai cijian guo-le, xiaodi fengyang ni-muzi-er-ren [...]
Wang Jin dao:
14. “Xiai dii [...]”

Wang Jin gazed at [the young man’s training] for some time, and, unintentionally, the following words slipped out of his mouth:
1. “He doth wield the pole quite well, but he hath flaws, and would thus be no match for a good fighter.”

Hearing his words, the young man cried with great anger:
2. “Who art thou (ni)? How durst thou come hither and mock my (wo) art? I (wo) have studied under many illustrious masters, and I (wo) hold that they were not inferior to thee (ni). Dost thou (ni) dare to pit thyself against me (wo)?”

Ere he could finish his words, the old master of the house arrived and shouted at the young man:
3. “Be not discourteous!”

At that the young man said:
4. “This impudent servant (ponai-zhesi, an impolite DA structure) did mock my pole fighting art.”

The old master of the house said:
5. “Honoured guest (keren, a non-familiar polite EA expression), have you skill with the pole?”

Wang Jin said:
6. “To some small degree, aye. May I ask milord (zhangshang, a non-familiar polite EA expression used towards interlocutors with higher rank than that of the speaker) who this young man might be?”

The old master of the house said:
7. “He is the son of this old-person (laohan, a non-familiar polite DA term used by older speakers).”

Wang Jin said:

8. “Now, if the young lord (xiao-guanren, a non-familiar polite EA term used to refer to the son of the interlocutor) of the house has a care to learn [pole fencing], how would it be if this humble person (xiaoren, a non-familiar polite DA) were to correct his (ta [technique])?”

The old master of the house said:

9. “It would be splendid.”

He ordered the young man to prostrate himself before Wang as his master. But how could the young man agree to prostrate himself [before Wang]? He said even more furiously:

10. “Father, listen not to the foolish words of this servant (zhesi, an impolite DA expression)! If he (ta) can best my (wo) pole technique, I (wo) shall forthwith prostrate myself before him (ta) as my master.”

Wang Jin said:

11. “If the young lord (xiao-guanren) doth not [object to fighting with] this simple [man], we can try a bout.”

[...]

The young man scrambled to his feet. He immediately brought a stool from the side, and, asking Wang Jin to sit down, he prostrated himself in front of Wang, saying:

12. “I (wo) have learnt from many masters, in vain: they did not possess half [thy skill]. Master (shifu, a familiar EA expression used towards teachers), I can but respectfully beseech thee to undertake my tuition.”

[...]

How could Shi Jin let him [go]? He said:

13. “Master (shifu), I beg thee to remain, the young brother (xiaodi, a familiar polite DA expression) shall respectfully care for thee and thy mother [...]”

Wang Jin said:

14. “Wise younger brother (xiandi, a familiar polite EA expression) [...]”

(Chapter 2)

The interactants of discourse (1) are Wang Jin 王進, former fencing master of the Chinese imperial army, the old owner of the manor where Wang stays with his mother on their journey, and the owner’s son Shi Jin 史進. The above conversation occurs when Shi Jin challenges Wang Jin who, albeit unintentionally, criticised his pole fighting technique. When Wang defeats Shi Jin without any effort, Shi asks him to be his fencing trainer and Wang accepts Shi’s request. However, after completing Shi’s training Wang decides to continue his journey with his mother, despite the wish of Shi who wants him to remain.

Discourse extract (1) exemplifies a case when a shift is made from the impolite EA/DA category, which connotes a positive emotional/relational change. The interaction begins with a conflict between Shi and Wang. In turns four and ten Shi, who feels offended by Wang’s critique, applies the impolite DA expressions zhesi 这厮 (‘this servant’, an impolite DA term regularly applied in the vernacular texts; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1207) and ponai-zhesi 反耐這厮 (‘this impudent servant’) to refer to Wang. Furthermore, in turns two,
four, and ten he uses the second person PP form *ni* 你 to address Wang and the first person PPs *wo* 我 and *an* 我 to refer to himself; using PP forms count as impolite in the given context because in traditional Chinese etiquette guest right was particularly strong (see Wang Weimin 1994, pp. 37-42), and hosts had to adhere to a deferential register when interacting with their guests. While Shi speaks in a rude manner, Wang makes attempts to maintain the deferential register of his interaction with the head of the manor (see turns five to nine and eleven), and so he does not only avoid making a direct response to Shi’s attack, but he also applies the indirect non-familiar EA form *xiao-guanren* 小官人 (‘the young lord’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1045) in reference to Shi. In turn twelve, however, after Wang defeats him, Shi’s behaviour changes: he now wants Wang to become his trainer. This behavioural change manifests itself in the language use of Shi who shifts from the impolite/non-polite categories to familiar EA/DAs; this shift is an important symbolic step because the teacher-student relationship was categorised as a typically familiar one in old China. Thus, Shi addresses Wang with the familiar honorific EA term *shifu* 師父 (‘master’, an EA form expressing familiar connotation when it is used to address the teacher of oneself; see Ji Changhong 2000, pp. 804-805), in order to express respect and emotional closeness.

It becomes evident from the above interaction that Shi’s VSH, which signals an emotional/relational change, serves a personal interactional aim, that is, it helps Shi to make his request effective (i.e., it works as a ‘booster’ for Shi’s request, cf. Holmes 1984). By using the familiar *shifu* (‘master’) form – instead of non-familiar EA/DAs that could be appropriate if Shi simply wanted to reinforce Wang’s position as a guest – Shi implicitly presupposes that Wang will be his master. And it becomes evident from the addressee’s reaction that Shi’s strategy works: Wang Jin accepts both the explicit and the implicit request, that is, he does not only agree to become Wang’s tutor but also he expresses his consent by adopting the proposed familiar EA/DA category as the new unmarked vocative schema. In turns thirteen and fourteen (cited from that part of the story when Wang announces that he and his mother will leave Shi’s house) Wang responds to Shi’s familiar EA term *shifu* (‘master’) and DA term *xiaodi* 小弟 (‘the young brother’, a familiar DA form; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1040) by using the familiar EA form *xiandi* 賢弟 (‘wise younger brother’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1011). In summation, in this interaction the co-constructional process goes on according to the speaker’s intention because the communicational aims of the speaker and the addressee coincide.

The interaction of Shi and Wang exemplifies a case when a VSH is applied to attain personal conversational goals by expressing a positive emotional/relational change. The addressee accepts the application of the proposed vocative category (familiar EA/DAs), which hence develops to be an unmarked schema of the given community of practice. The next discourse extract (2) – which will show a shift from the category of non-polite vocatives/PPs – exemplifies a different case. Here the addressee, in contrast to
(1), declines to accept the proposed vocative category as a new vocative schema, which would serve the interactional goals of the speaker, because it is in conflict with her own interactional strategy:

(2) Song Jiang, hearing these words, became even more scared and said:
1. “I (wo) have never acted viciously against thee and thy mother (ni-ning'er-liang-ge, a non-polite vocative structure). Give it back! I (wo) must be on my way.”

Poxi said:
2. “Thou didst naught but scold me, this venerable lady (loaning, an impolite DA form used by women) for my affair with Third Zhang, but I tell thee that he is many times the man that thou (ni) art […].”

Song Jiang said:
3. “Good elder sister (hao-jiejie, a familiar vocative that expresses elevation because being old entailed high rank in old China), shriek not, the neighbours will surely hear it, and this would be beyond a jest.”

Poxi said:
4. “If thou (ni) dost fear to be overheard, thou (ni) shouldst not commit evil deeds! […].”

(Chapter 21)
Extract (2) exemplifies a VSH from the category of non-polite vocatives/PPs. Previously Song Jiang and Poxi applied PPs and other non-polite terms of address as an unmarked vocative schema, as it is also shown by turn one where Song addresses himself with the first person PP *wo* and refers to Poxi and her mother as *ni-niang’er-liang-ge* (‘thee and thy mother’). A change happens, however, in Song’s communicational behaviour when he realises the fact that Poxi seized his secret letter that contains incriminating evidence against him: he makes a positive VSH in turn three. In order to address Poxi in a deferential way, Song uses the familiar EA form *hao-jiejie* (‘good elder sister’, a familiar polite EA form) in response to Poxi, even though she has just made a negative VSH by applying the impolite EA *laoniang* (‘I, this venerable lady’, an impolite EA form used by females; see Ji Changhong 2000, pp. 512-513). Although this deviation from the unmarked vocative schema does not express positive emotions (the narrative section makes it clear that Song is in fact scared), it is nevertheless a positive shift. Obviously, Song applies this VSH strategically as an interactional tool, in order to improve his relationship with Poxi and so persuade her to give the document back to him.

While here the VSH works as a strategically applied booster for a request, similarly to extract (1), the addressee’s reaction differs from that of the previous interaction. As it becomes evident from turn four, Poxi does not want to have her emotional/social relationship with Song be improved because it would go against her interactional goals, that is, to blackmail Song and manage to get divorced. Therefore, she does not accept the proposed vocative schema and proceeds to use PP forms, that is, Song’s communicational attempt fails and the given community of practice does not even temporarily adopt a new unmarked vocative schema.

Extracts (1) and (2) are mutual counter-examples from the perspective that they represent opposite outcomes of interactional co-construction: while in (1) the interactants can easily negotiate a new unmarked vocative schema, in (2) the addressee declines the proposed change. The next extract, (3) – which exemplifies a positive shift from the non-familiar polite EA/DA category – shows a further case of discourse co-construction when the addressee, reluctant at first to adopt the proposed schema as unmarked, finally accepts the speaker’s VSH:

(3) 那人入到茶坊裡面坐下，茶博士便道：
1. 「客官要尋王教頭，只問這個提轄，便都認的。」
史進連忙起身施禮，道：
2. 「官人，請坐拜茶。」
那人見了史進長大魁偉，像條好漢，便來與他施禮。兩個坐下。史進道：

16 Although the present analysis focuses on Song Jiang’s VSH and Poxi’s counter vocative, it should be noted that Song’s VSH also works as a counter vocative. By shifting to the familiar honorific category, Song implicitly refuses to acknowledge Poxi’s negative VSH, in order to keep the tone of the interaction amicable, which is necessary to strategically convince Poxi to return the seized writing.
3. 「小人太膽，敢問官人大姓大名？」

那人道：
4. 「喲，經略府提轄，姓魯，諱個大字。敢問阿哥，你姓甚麼？」

史進道：
5. 「小人是華洲華陰縣人氏，姓史名進。請問官人，小人有個師父」

[...]

兩個挽了胳膊，出了茶坊來，上街行得三五十步，只見一簇眾人圍住白地上。史進道：
6. 「兄長，我們看一看。」

When the newcomer took a seat, the tea-master said at once:
1. “If the respected guest doth want to find Master Wang, he should simply enquire of Tixia for he doth seem to know everyone.”

Shi Jin hurriedly rose from his seat and bowed before Tixia, saying:
2. “Respected official (guanren, a non-familiar polite EA expression), I would like to respectfully offer you some tea.”

Tixia, seeing that Shi Jin was a well-built valiant man, quickly responded with a bow. They sat down together. Shi Jin said:
3. “Prithee forgive me, but may this humble person (xiaoren, a non-familiar polite EA expression) be so bold as to enquire after your illustrious family name and honourable personal name, respected official (guanren)?”

Tixia replied:
4. “I (sajia, a dialectal PP) am Tixia (here referring to oneself with his own person name expresses familiar self-denigration) from this prefecture, my family name is Lu, and my taboo name is ‘Da’. May I make so bold as to ask thy (ni) family name, elder brother (a-ge, a familiar polite EA expression)?”

Shi Jin said:

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17 In old Chinese tea houses and rich families tea was made and served by experts known as ‘tea masters’ (cha-boshi 茶博士).
5. “This humble person (xiaoren) is a man from the Huayin district of Huayin, his family name is Shi, and personal name is Jin. I would like to ask the respected official (guanren): this humble person (xiaoren) hath a master [...]”

[...] The two of them came out from the teahouse arm in arm, and after a short walk on the street they saw a crowd ahead. Shi Jin said:

6. “Elder bro... (a familiar EA expression), we (women) will go thither.”

(Chapter 3)

The participants of interaction (3) are Lu Tixia 魯提轄 (regularly mentioned in his later clerical name as Lu Zhishen 魯智深 in the novel), a central figure of the Shuihu quanzhuan, and Shi Jin (see extract 1). The above conversation occurs when Shi, being on a quest to find his former instructor Wang Jin, enters a tea house. After he inquires after Wang, the tea master suggests that he make acquaintance with the valiant man Lu Tixia who might be able to provide information to Shi on the whereabouts of his instructor.

The conversation of Lu Tixia and Shi Jin exemplifies a shift from the category of non-familiar polite EA/DA terms. The interaction begins by Shi addressing Lu with the non-familiar EA guanren 官人 (‘respected official’, a non-familiar EA used towards unknown interlocutors; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 326); this non-familiar honorific form was quite regularly applied to make acquaintances in old China in a polite way (see Kádár 2007a), and so Shi’s vocative use here represents a sociopragmatically unmarked application. It turns out from the narrative section that Lu is ready to accept the proposed deferential register as an interactional schema, which is further reinforced in turn three by Shi who applies again the non-familiar polite EA guanren (‘respected official’) to refer to Lu and the non-familiar polite DA form xiaoren (‘this humble person’) to refer to himself. This vocative schema is abandoned, however, in turn four when Lu makes a VSH: he applies the dialectal first person PP form sajia 洒家 and uses his personal name to refer to himself in order to express closeness. As noted in Kádár 2007b, p. 39, the dialectal sajia “lacks the formality of standard forms”, thus, in the given context it expresses informality; because this formula co-occurs with the familiar polite self-denigrating strategy (cf. footnote 9) of referring to oneself with one’s personal name, Lu’s VSH works as a shift from non-familiar honorific terms of address to the category of familiar honorific vocatives. And, Lu reinforces this VSH by using the familiar polite EA form a-ge 阿哥 (‘elder brother’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 2), together with the second person PP ni, to refer to Shi.

As is made evident by the later plot of the novel, Li makes this VSH, which signals his wish for positive emotional/relational changes, because he aims to form a close interpersonal relationship with Shi. It becomes clear, however, from the response of Shi in turn five that he is reluctant to accept the familiar category proposed by Li as unmarked schema: he responds to Li by using the non-familiar polite DA and EA forms xiaoren (‘this humble person’)
and guanren (‘respected official’). Shi presumably adheres to the use of the non-familiar EA/DA category because he does not intend to involve a freshly acquainted person into his familiar circle, a cautious attitude that is typical to both traditional and modern Chinese social behaviour. In other words, Shi’s continuous application of non-familiar honorific vocatives expresses, as a meta-message, the polite rejection of the vocative schema proposed by Lu. In fact, there is a lengthy interaction before Shi finally adopts the proposed VSH: only in turn six, which occurs after the tea house conversation, does Shi utilise the familiar EA xiongzhang 兄長 (‘elder brother’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1091) to address Lu. In summation, in extract (3) the vocative schema is formed in a way that differs from extracts (1) and (2): while the speakers finally co-construct a new unmarked schema, the adoption of this schema requires a longer negotiation.

Let us finally study extract (4), where the VSH – in contrast to the above examples – has a negative interactional application. That is, it is utilised to attain personal interactional goals by increasing the emotional/social distance between the interlocutors:

(4) 林沖見了, [...] 道:\n1. 「娘子, 小人有句話說, [...] 今去滄州, 生死不保, 殊恐誤了娘子青春, 今已寫下幾字在此, 萬望娘子休等小人, 有好頭脑, 自行招嫁, 莫為林沖誤了賢妻。」
2. 「丈夫! 我不曾有半些兒點污, 如何把我休了!」
Lin Chong jian le, [...] dao:
2. “Zhangfu! Wo bu zeng-you ban-xie-er-dian wu, ruhe ba wo xiu-le!”
[When] Lin Chong saw [her] [...] he said:
1. “Madam (niangzi, a general vocative for women), this humble person (xiaoren, a non-familiar DA form) hath something to tell you [...] Now I go to Cangzhou where my fate will be unsure, and I am sincerely afraid that I will ruin your youth, madam (niangzi). I have already written down some words here, and I expect ten thousand times that you, madam (niangzi) will not wait for this humble person (xiaoren), and you will be clever enough to get yourself married. It must not be that Lin Chong (here referring to oneself with his own full name expresses non-familiar self denigration) should ruin his wise wife (xianqi, a rare, familiar EA expression).”

The woman, upon hearing these words, wept:

18 It may be noted that Chinese prefer this kind of indirect refusal in interactions where ‘facework’ is required (cf. Luming Mao 1994).
2. “Husband (zhangfu, a familiar vocative)! I (wo) have an undefiled name, how couldst thou leave me (wo)?”

(水滸全傳 Shuihu quanzhuan / Chapter 8)

This interaction occurs between the army officer Lin Chong 林沖 and his wife. Prior to this interaction the son of the marshal of the imperial army wanted to rape Lin’s wife. Although Lin could hinder his plan, the marshal—who became furious because of Lin’s conflict with his son—charged Lin with a fictitious crime and Lin was sentenced to be deported to a penal settlement. The above conversation takes place before Lin sets off on his journey to the penal settlement. Lin wants to divorce his wife, and hide her in the house of his father-in-law, in order to thwart the marshal’s son’s plans to harass his now solitary wife.

In this example the VSH expresses a negative connotation, in contrast to extracts (1)-(3): by shifting from the familiar to the non-familiar category Lin expresses emotional distance. Prior to this proposal of divorce Lin and his wife used to mutually apply familiar EA/DAs, and other non-honorific familiar vocatives, as an unmarked schema. In turn one, however, Lin applies non-familiar vocatives: he addresses his wife several times with the non-familiar term of address niangzi 娘子 (‘madam’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 644), and he uses the non-familiar DA term xiaoren (‘this humble person’) to refer to himself, and also he applies the non-familiar self-denigrating strategy of addressing himself using his full name. Regarding this latter strategy it should be mentioned that this way of addressing oneself had a non-familiar connotation in old China (see Kádár 2007a), unlike the strategy of addressing oneself with one’s own personal name that expressed familiar self-denigration (cf. turn three in extract 3).

It is obvious from the context of this interaction that Lin Chong’s VSH has a strategic goal. Lin shifts from a familiar to a non-familiar vocative schema in order to express emotional distance, and so he applies this VSH to facilitate the acceptance of the divorce proposal (that is, his VSH has a ‘boosting’ function in the given utterance, similarly to Shi Jin’s shift in extract 1, for example). It should be noted that Lin’s VSH is complex from the perspective that he does not make a ‘determined’ shift, that is, he closes his utterance with the familiar EA form xianqi 賢妻 (‘wise wife’, a familiar EA form; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1014). This ‘mixed’ feature of Lin’s utterance exemplifies the complexity that VSHs can have in real-life communication where emotions can be at odds with interactional goals. Lin supposedly finishes his speech with this relatively rare familiar honorific formula because it helps him to soften the ‘cold’ tone of his utterance, or, in other words, the familiar form works here as a linguistic ‘emotional marker’ (cf. Maynard 1993), which makes the previous VSH more acceptable in the given interaction.

It becomes evident from the reaction of Lin’s wife that her interactional goal is different from that of Lin: she does not want to divorce her husband. Therefore, she is reluctant to accept the proposed schema as an unmarked one.
because it conflicts with her own interactional interest, that is, to maintain her familiar relationship with Lin. In order to preserve, or restore, the unmarked familiar schema, she applies the familiar vocative zhangfu 丈夫 (‘husband’; see Ji Changhong 2000, p. 1202) together with two PP forms. It should be noted that none of these three formulae is honorific; Lin’s wife presumably applies them instead of familiar EA/DAAs with the strategic aim to degrade Lin’s utterance by softening the grave style of his utterance, that is, these formulae work as typical ‘downgraders’ (see Trosborg 1994, pp. 209-214) in the given context. In short, in (4) the addressee declines to accept the new vocative proposed by the speaker, and, as it turns out later in the novel, as a result of this co-constructional process the vocative standard of the given community of practice remains unchanged, similarly to extract (2).

This section has studied four discourse extracts as case studies to explore the general characteristics of the traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon and examine VSHs from a constructional perspective. Let us summarise the findings of this analysis in the following concluding section.

4. Conclusion

This paper has examined traditional Chinese VSHs, which have been neglected by works that study Chinese terms of address. The present study has grouped the large Chinese vocative lexicon into four categories, by means of the vocative category concept, and explored shifts within these categories by analysing four discourse extracts cited from the novel Shuihu quanzhuan. The examination of these extracts has shown that shifts could be made from all of the four vocative categories, that is, the speakers could deviate from every vocative standard, despite what is regularly claimed: that in East Asian communication, such as historical Chinese, the interpersonal use of vocatives is non-retractable and sociolinguistically prescribed. In other words, the analysis of the discourse extracts has not only given a survey of the traditional Chinese vocative phenomenon, but it has also illustrated that in historical Chinese communication VSHs were pivotal interactional devices. The fact that VSHs could either be applied to connote positive or negative emotional/relational change also supports this claim.

Besides exploring the traditional Chinese VSH phenomenon, the present paper has contributed to the historical pragmatic research of VSHs by demonstrating that a certain shift should be interpreted in the wider context of discourse co-construction. While the analysis has supported the claim of the earlier historical pragmatic theories, that the speakers produce VSHs to show emotional/relational changes as meta-messages, it has been further shown that VSHs are interactional resources as well, which can be utilised to attain certain discourse goals. Although earlier historical pragmatic studies tended to interpret VSH as a ‘neutral’ phenomenon that only manifests some alterations of the
speaker’s state of mind, the constructional analysis has illustrated that VSHs are not ‘neutral’ from the perspective that the addressees have to relate themselves to a given VSH. That is, even in a case like extract 3 where the VSH does not serve an indirect interactional aim (in contrast to extracts 1, 2 and 4 where VSHs have a boosting function), the addressee has to somehow react to the given shift. And, since VSHs are interactional tools they can either be accepted or rejected by the addressee. As the examination of the discourse extracts has illustrated, the readiness or reluctance of the addressee to adopt a proposed vocative schema (or, rather, a proposed emotional/relational state) as unmarked strongly depends on whether there is consent or conflict between the interactional goals of the speaker and the addressee. And in reality it is often the case that the addressee completely rejects a proposed schema in the course of co-constructing a given interaction.

The constructional view, which claims that the outcome of the co-constructional process cannot be predicted, might seem to be discouraging from the perspective of the historical pragmatic research of terms of address that traditionally observes VSHs in an isolated and systematic way. Nevertheless, the incorporation of the co-constructional concept in historical pragmatic research has its own rewards because such an analytic methodology provides challenging insights into the interactional work of VSHs.
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APPENDIX I: THE TYPES OF VSHs IN THE 178 STUDIED DISCOURSE EXTRACTS

POSITIVE SHIFTS:

1. impolite EA/DAs → non-polite vocatives/PPs: 12
2. impolite EA/DAs → non-familiar polite EA/DAs: 18
3. impolite EA/DAs → familiar polite EA/DAs: 16
4. non-polite vocatives/PPs → non-familiar polite EA/DAs: 25
5. non-polite vocatives/PPs → familiar polite EA/DAs: 11
6. non-familiar polite EA/DAs → familiar polite EA/DAs: 29

NEGATIVE SHIFTS:

7. familiar polite EA/DAs → non-familiar polite EA/DAs: 10
8. familiar polite EA/DAs → non-polite vocatives/PPs: 7
9. familiar polite EA/DAs → impolite EA/DAs: 15
10. non-familiar polite EA/DAs → non-polite vocatives/PPs: 9
11. non-familiar polite EA/DAs → impolite EA/DAs: 10
12. polite vocatives/PPs → impolite EA/DAs: 16
**APPENDIX II: LIST OF THE STUDIED WORKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Chinese title (in alphabetical order)</th>
<th>Translated title</th>
<th>Origin (dynasty)</th>
<th>Genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Chuke pai’an jingqi 初刻拍案警奇</td>
<td>“[Stories at Which] to Pound the Table in Amazement, Volume One”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novella <em>(huaben 話本)</em> collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Di gong an 狄公案</td>
<td>“The Cases of Judge Di”</td>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>novel (crime story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Er’ke pai’an jingqi 二刻拍案警奇</td>
<td>“[Stories at Which] to Pound the Table in Amazement, Volume Two”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novella <em>(huaben 話本)</em> collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Honglou meng 紅樓夢</td>
<td>“Dream of the Red Chamber”</td>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>novel (saga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jigong quanzhuan 濟公全傳</td>
<td>“The Complete Story of Master Ji”</td>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>novel (knight-errant fiction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Jin Ping Mei 金瓶梅</td>
<td>“Plum Blossom in the Golden Vase”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novel (erotic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jingshi tongyan 警世通言</td>
<td>“Universal Words to Alarm the World”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novella <em>(huaben 話本)</em> collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Longtu gong’an 龍圖公案</td>
<td>“The Cases of Judge Bao”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>crime story collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Genre</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Niehai hua (孽海花)</td>
<td>“Flower in a Sea of Sin”</td>
<td>Qing</td>
<td>novel (roman-à-clef)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sanguo zhi yanyi (三國志演義)</td>
<td>“The Novel of the History of the Three Kingdoms”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novel (historical/picaresque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Shuihu quanzhuan (水滸全傳)</td>
<td>“Water Margin Story”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novel (picaresque)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Xingshi hengyan (醒世恆言)</td>
<td>“Lasting Words to Awaken the World”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novella (huaben) collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Xingshi yinyuan zhuanyan (醒世姻緣傳)</td>
<td>“A Marriage to Shock the World Awake”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novel (saga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yushi mingyan (喻世明言)</td>
<td>“Enlightened Words to Instruct the World”</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>novella (huaben) collection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>